

Catholic Theatre Conference

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President: Therese Marie Cuny
Secretarial Office: 2644 Lawndale Avenue
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Joseph F. Rice
Immaculate Heart College
Los Feliz and Western
Hollywood 27, California

... Reporting On The Convention ...

It was all over so fast and yet so much was accomplished. Like all conventions there was the usual excitement of meeting old friends and the pleasure of meeting those who are only names until something like a convention brings them face to face. There was the ecstatic thrill of mountain scenery (for some, the first time!), not only as we moved from building to building, but in beautiful Machboeuf Dining Hall one hardly knew whether to concentrate on the excellent food or the breath-taking view of those ever-changing-in-color mountains. There was that unforgettable evening when, under the stars, accompanied by the rustling of wind through the trees, we listened to Paul Picerni read those eloquent lines of "The Comedienne". There was the hub-bub each night of "whose riding with who" as we journeyed back to town, many of us piling in the chartered bus of the Minneapolis delegation and imposing on the never-worn-out generosity of Sister Charitas. There were sessions that were both educational and entertaining and there were sessions than "you'd never think of missing" like that in which David Itkin gave us one of his inimitable demonstrations on acting and demonstrated by walking off-stage to tell the lady in the first row that she was beautiful. (How few receive such a compliment in so dramatic a fashion!). And none will forget the mental stimulation and the emotional appeal of "A Boy With a Cart" done by Immaculate Heart College in quartet style with verse choir. Under Joseph Rice's able direction, it was a superb performance. The discussion that followed was animated, interesting, and deservedly high in praise. These, however, are the more frequent highlights of every convention. The important and outstanding feature of our convention was that it was activated by the enthusiasm and interest of people who came because they were and are sincerely interested in Catholic theatre. The difficulties of the past year have been too apparent to pretend that they were non-existent and it was easy to justify any lack of interest and cooperation by saying "what's the use!" But, like the leaven in the loaf, as long as some exists, the activating force and life continues. This convention was marked then, by those who want to see that leaven grow—to give life—and are willing to help. This does not imply that those who were not present lacked such interest. We know that there were many who would have been there except for conflicting activities and with all such, we felt their spirit, knew of their good wishes, and continue to rely on their co-operation. That they missed the convention was our disappointment and their loss for it was highly successful in spirit, in forging aims, in program, and in stimulation of ideas for the future.

His Excellency, Urban J. Vehr, Archbishop of Denver, opened the Convention with solemn high mass at the Cathedral. It was impressive and beautiful, and the address by Rev. Charles Herbert, C.M. of St. Thomas Seminary was truly inspiring.

Even the moths (or were they millers?), attracted by the bright lights of the theatre, failed to draw attention from the unusual and artistic presentation of Sidney Kingsley's "Darkness At Noon" by St. Louis University. The style of presentation, the excellence of the individual performers, and the unusual pacing of the show drew high praise from all.

"Mary In Melodyland" and "Prom Time", produced in the outdoor theatre, offered welcome variety to the heavier program of the day. It found even the nuns on departure walking, or shall I say strutting, to the tune "I'm the Duke!"

Everything was going too smoothly—something had to happen. But it was too bad that it had to happen to one of the cast of Loyola Academy (Chicago, Ill.) production. It's a little hard to act with a broken arm, especially when it confines one to a hospital bed, but Mr. Bamzerger's cast weathered the emergency and those who did not know of the accident were completely unaware of the hurried change in the cast. Their presentation of "Afraid of The Dark" showed sincere motivation and nice esprit de corps.

"The Chimney Corner", presented by that animated and effervescent delegation from Academy of Holy Angels (Minneapolis) lived up to their usual reputation of doing excellent work. Orchids to Sister Charitas—not only for the fine direction—but for thinking of the convention in terms of numbers! How many were there from Minneapolis? I stopped counting after 50.

There should be many calls for copies of "No Way Home" by Joan Hoogstraet. Joan not only wrote the play for the St. Louis University High School Institute but directed as well. We hope her pen does not run dry for a long, long time. It flows so interestingly!

Those of us who were present will smile reminiscently and sympathetically as we recall Mr. Bach's frequent admonitions "— will those on the next panel please hurry so that we do not fall behind schedule," "— may I remind you that the meeting in the auditorium has already begun —" and so on ad infinitum. Mr. Bach was at once a conductor, a leader, a timekeeper, a pleader, and a watcher, but above all, he was one of the most efficient and exacting of convention

chairman it has been our experience to enjoy. To him, to Sister Frances Marie, president of Loretto Heights College, and to all the Sisters of the College we stand indebted. The arrangements, the hospitality, the quiet and efficient handling of events cannot be answered with just a brief "thank you". We will instead ask God to bless all at the Heights for the two-year push forward they have given to Catholic theatre. Our remembrance of their kindness will last beyond that period, however.

There are so many other highlights and names that should be mentioned. Our monthly, however, would have to be a daily to include them all.

In the last minute rush for trains, planes, and cars, few remembered to say more than "Goodbye" and "We had a lovely time" but in the light of retrospect, we can evaluate more clearly and the year ahead becomes a new challenge through the stimulation of ideas.

One last thought— isn't it too bad we have to wait another two years for the next convention? But start planning anyway. We have! We hope soon to let you know the place.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

Perhaps the most noteworthy change in operation of the Conference lies in the plan to permit high school and college students to become individual members. This plan will, we believe, more really indoctrinate them with the ideas and ideals of CTC. In past, the stress for aid and interest was laid upon the directors of the schools who, in most cases, are already aware of the significance and purpose of Catholic Theatre. The students knew only that their school was a member of CTC and, upon graduation from that school, they severed ties with CTC as well. Our students must become the real fruit of our labors and our main hope for the future. In practice then, this plan will admit them to membership upon payment of \$1.50 for the first year for which they will receive:

- 1) a copy of the monthly calendar which will include a special page devoted to the interests of high school students.

- 2) A medal by which they may be recognized as members everywhere.
- 3) Their school (provided there is a minimum of 25 memberships) will be permitted two award medals each year for outstanding work—the measure of achievement to be decided by the school. The award medal will be the same as the membership medal but will be cast in gold.
- 4) They will be given reduced rates for all regional and national activities of the CTC—such rates to be arranged by those in charge of these activities.
- 5) They may renew subscriptions upon payment of only 50 cents—that is, the \$1.50 fee is payable only at time of initiation.

Needless to say, this new plan will create much additional work in the office and we count on your cooperation. We are working frantically to get this plan in operation by September. May we then ask college and high school directors to follow the directions below:

- 1) Acquaint your students with this new plan and help them to realize the good they may do and the gain they receive by this personal induction into CTC. Do this during the first week when you return to classes.
- 2) Send in the numbers and names to your regional chairman who, in turn, will communicate with the central office. The central office must receive this by September 30th so that we may know how many more issues of October calendar will need to be printed. We do not want to run short and dis-appoint any one.
- 3) When the pins arrive, we suggest some ceremony for distribution. The pins might be blessed by the chaplain and distributed in chapel after a short talk, explaining their significance.
- 4) When the monthly calendars arrive each month—and they will be sent in one bundle to the Director or Moderator — call attention to

items of interest. Discuss events so that they may feel a part of the organization and know clearly and surely "what it is all about".

- 5) Application for the two awards must be made to the central office through Regional chairman) not later than January 1, 1954. We presume that most schools will make these awards toward the end of the school year. However, we will need to receive orders all at one time.
- 6) Toward the end of school year encourage graduates to take out regular memberships in order to continue their interest and activity. Such memberships might even be given as additional awards for outstanding work.
- 7) Encourage students to send in ideas, criticism, news items, and to feel that they have an active part in the organization. A representative in each school might be elected for this purpose.
- 8) For long-range planning, begin to build a fund to send two delegates to the next national convention. Interest, enthusiasm, and activity can be whipped up sharply by such an incentive. The next convention will definitely have activities—social and educational—for high school and college students. This was stressed at the convention as a need we must meet.

This individual membership offers no conflict with, and is not a substitute for, usual group membership for those students who wish to be linked more definitely with the Conference. We count on your fullest co-operation and prompt effort in making this new effort successful.

ELECTION RETURNS

The election of officers at the Ninth Biennial Convention in June brought into office the following who will "steer the course" during the next two years:

President

Therese Marie Cuny
Academy of Our Lady
Providence High School
Chicago, Illinois

Vice-President

Sister M. Angelita, B.V.M.
Immaculate Conception Academy
Davenport, Iowa

Executive Committee:

Walter Bamberger
Loyola Academy
Chicago, Illinois
Sister M. Charitas, C.S.J.
Academy of the Holy Angels
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Rev. Charles Herbst, C. M.
St. Thomas Seminary
Denver, Colorado
Sister M. Olive, S.P.
St. Mary-of-the-Woods College
Terre Haute, Indiana
Anna Helen Reuter
Immaculata High School
Alvernia High School
Chicago, Illinois
Joseph Rice
Immaculate Heart College
Hollywood, California
Mrs. Christopher Wyatt
Drama Critic, The Catholic World
New York, N.Y.

Our apprehension and awe at undertaking so large a task is matched only by our zeal, interest, and desire to serve. We lean heavily on the supposition that the cooperation of the past will continue to the same degree and that our patron, St. Genesius, may guide and direct us in this important work.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

At the moment, it is not like Mother Hubbard's cupboard! Even the trip from its office at Cudahy Library didn't give it a chance to be clear of correspondence, memos and a wide variety of items. Before plunging into them, however, I find myself wishing that our former secretary, Miss Pat Bradley, was coming along with it all. During the short period in which Miss Bradley worked with the Conference she served its needs most effectively. Her graciousness in handling requests for help, her promptness, her efficiency, and above all, her interest will be missed. It is only because of circumstances beyond control that she will be unable to continue working with the Conference. A hearty

thank you and God bless you Pat, for all you've done!

And while we're meditating on our indebtedness, the work of the previous Board of Directors calls for a large share of appreciation. Mr. W. Bamberger took over the reins of office at a highly critical time in the history of the Conference. It is easy to work when the atmosphere is charged with incentive and the assurance of success, but it calls for "stout hearts and strong hands" to continue when the going is rough. To Mr. Bamberger and the members of his Board, our fullest and most sincere appreciation!

CROSS-COUNTRY CIRCUIT

COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

The Anselmian Abbey players (Manchester, N. H.) having successfully produced "The Masterful Monk" by Owen Francis Dudley, closed their season with a production of the musical "The Red Mill." Feminine roles were played by girls from Notre Dame College and Mount St. Mary College. This was a tri-college endeavor and, from all reports, highly successful. Father Thomas Flaherty, O.S.B., is the ambitious director of this group.

College of St. Scholastica (Duluth, Minn.) gave an inspiring and impressive production of Robert Hugh Benson's "The Upper Room" under the direction of Sister M. Annella, O.S.B.

Cathedral High School (Sioux Falls, S. Dak.), under the direction of Sister M. Matthew, gave "Seven Keys to Baldpate" by M. Cohan.

College of St. Catherine (St. Paul, Minn.) gave a Creative Arts Festival. Experts discussed techniques in music, art, and dance. "Donna Rosita", a romantic drama by Garcia Lorca, was then presented as exemplifying a coordination of the arts for modern stage. Miss Mabel Frey is the director.

Sister M. Marguerite, R.S.M., speech director at Mercy College and now studying advance theatre at University of Michigan, directed a play in pantomime "The Shepherd in the Distance" by Holland Hudson, in the Mendelsohn Theatre. Ann

Arbor. This presentation was part of "Third Laboratory Play Bill" of the University of Michigan, Department of Speech. She did a repeat performance of the play for the International Pageant of the International Committee of Student Legislature in Hill Auditorium in late May.

Holy Name College (Spokane, Wash.) gave a most effective presentation of "High Ground". The director, Sister Mathilda Mary, reports that the play is much more effective without the disturbing sub-plot dealing with the nun's vague and disedifying personal problem. Many speeches, seemingly unconvincing for a nun, were also eliminated to the greater satisfaction of all concerned with the production. The recent Play Festival, sponsored by Holy Name College, was not only artistically successful, but financially as well. Half of the proceeds came to CTC. Thank you, Sister, for your generous and kind thought of CTC!

Clarke College (Dubuque, Ia.) and Mundelein College (Chicago, Ill.) had only just closed the curtains on graduation when they opened again on the heavy but interesting programs of Summer School. Students at Mundelein, along with the regular staff, are coaching children classes throughout the term. Clarke College is offering a Theatre Institute for High School students and a Summer Play Production Workshop for teachers.

St. Louis University Department of Speech and Drama, under the direction of Father R. Johnston, S.J., is also featuring a Summer Institute for High School students.

HIGH SCHOOLS

Sister Trineaus, directed an enjoyable presentation of "Seven Sisters" at St. Joseph Academy, St. Paul. Boys from Cretin High School played the male roles.

St. Margaret's Academy of Minneapolis, presented "Quality Street" with the boys of St. Thomas Military Academy assisting.

For their spring production, Holy Angels Academy (Minneapolis) chose "Everynun" by D. A. Lord, S. J. A cast of 315, inclusive of 150 grade school

children, were directed by Sister Charitas. Mothers, too, were drafted into service and played the roles of old-time graduates. Reports of the production are glowing. Cast and audience found great pleasure and value in the presentation.

St. Joseph Academy, Yakima, Washington, reports a successful production of "High Ground" in late spring. Director was Sister Hubert of Jesus, F.C.S.P.

The Ninth Annual Children's Theatre Conference Meeting of the AETA will be held at Adelphi College in Long Island, N.Y. Work shops will be conducted on August 24, 25 and 26, while regular Conference Meetings will be held on the 26th, 27th, 28th, and 29th. The program is interesting and worthwhile and, for those working in Children's Theatre, would seem to be a "must".

MAY WE ASK

So many members, deeply interested in the future of CTC, have offered to help out in one way or another. May we add "another way"? There are many business houses which would gladly advertise in the Catholic Theatre Production Calendar, but either they are unaware of its existence or we're unaware of theirs. Can you bring us together? You can be of very great service to the Conference in this way. Stop right here and ask yourself if there are any groups or organizations you can contact (or let us know, and we'll follow through), please!

And when you do business with our advertisers (and we hope you do!) be sure to let them know that you are doing so through CTC.

REGIONAL ACTIVITY

Regional activity is being worked at with beaver-like precision and energy. You will be hearing from your Regional Chairman soon who, working under the direction of St. Mary Olive (St. Mary-of-the-Woods College), will acquaint you with these details and plans. Sister has been most exacting and "idea-ful" and we know you will share enthusiasm and offer fullest support.

YEARLY BULLETIN

Many of us missed the yearly Bulletin, which we were unable to publish during the past two years. We know you will be pleased to hear, then, that there will be a Yearly Bulletin ready for distribution by September, 1954. That sounds a long way off, but Father Herbst has already started work on it. Father Herbst you will recall, gave us such a splendid job on the Convention Program, so we are already looking forward to a "super-super" 1954 edition of the Bulletin. Start plans at once for the material and photos you expect to submit for publication.

IN APPRECIATION

To Father James Farrell, S. J., for his generosity in donating office space for the past two years.

To Father A. H. Mattlin, S.J., for his generous and gracious co-operation in this plan.

The office has now been moved to where it can more closely and conveniently function with the President. Please make a note of the new address—2634 Lawndale Avenue, Evanston, Illinois.

LEST WE FORGET!

The service and success of the Conference can be great only in proportion to the response, co-operation, and interest of its members. Will you give your new officers not just a congratulatory pat on the back, but a really good push forward into their new activities by:

- a) A steady stream of news items
- b) Announcement of all productions, preferably in advance. You may find you sell some extra tickets that way, too!
- c) Those all-important dues—and they are due again!
- d) And ideas!

Organizations frequently contact the central office for suggestions as to a critic-judge or a speaker at some activity. Needless to say, it is impossible to know "who's

who" throughout the country and, because we know there are many who are extremely capable in this regard—people whom we don't want to miss—may we ask you to list such names and send them to us? We find there is a tendency to repeat the same people within a given area, with the result that, while he may be an interesting well-informed, and forceful speaker, people will say "Oh, I've heard him before!" He's "old stuff" in his own back yard, but to another region or vicinity, he brings new ideas and viewpoints. Just jot down the names of people whom you have found interesting in this capacity, place them in an envelope, and send it on . . .

. . . That pause was to allow you time to do it. Thank you!

There have been so many requests for an all-nun cast that we believe you will be interested in hearing of "A Soul In Array" presented by the University Theatre at Notre Dame University (Indiana) on July 23rd and 24th. The play was written and directed by Michael Casey. Nine nuns, students of acting in the Laboratory Theatre, played the roles of nuns and the entire production crew was manned (or should we say "nunned"? by the classes in Technical production. Notre Dame is also closing a highly successful and popular course in Choral Speaking taught by Sister M. Agnese, S.P. This is Sister's third summer of instruction on the Notre Dame faculty. Later in the year, Sister will give us some new ideas and suggestions on this too-often-neglected field of Drama.

Plans are being formulated for a repetition of last year's successful Riverview party for high school students of the Chicago area. Hundreds of students convened for a good time during the late summer and, so enjoyable was the day, there was unanimity in the idea that "we must do it again." Mr. Walter Bamberger is in charge of arrangements and his committee is already at work on details.



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